

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 AID-05 TRSE-00 IO-13 ACDA-07 /082 W
-----076939 131601Z /40

R 131318Z SEP 77
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6038
INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
CINCPAC
AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMCONSUL KARRACHI
AMCONSUL LAHORE
AMCONSUL MADRAS
AMEMBASSY KABUL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 12863

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PK, AF, IN
SUBJ: MEA VIEWS OF PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN

SUMMARY: MEA STILL THINKS THAT GENERAL ZIA WILL HOLD
THE PAK ELECTIONS MORE OR LESS ON SCHEDULE, BUT FINDS
INCREASING EVIDENCE THAT THE PAK MILITARY WILL CONTINUE
TO PLAY A POLITICAL ROLE IN THEIR POST-ELECTION SCENE.
THE INDIANS WERE PLEASED WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S
VISIT TO KABUL. THEY FOUND THERE SOME AFGHAN APPRE-
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HENSION ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS IN PAKIST., THE INDIANS SAY
(AND ALL EVIDENCE SUGGESTS) THAT THEY ARE CONTINUING TO
TAKE A HANDS-OFF APPROACH TOWARD PAKISTAN DURING ITS
POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES. END SUMMARY.

1. IN A SEPTEMBER 12 MEETING WITH THE EMBASSY POLITICAL
COUNSELOR, MEA JOINT SECRETARY (PAKISTAN/AFGHANISTAN)

I.P. SINGH ASSESSED THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN PAKISTAN AND GAVE FIRST-HAND COMMENTS ON THE RECENT VISIT TO AFGHANISTAN OF FOREIGN MINISTER VAJPAYEE.

2. SINGH SAID THAT IT CONTINUED TO BE MEA'S ASSESSMENT THAT ZIA WOULD FOLLOW THROUGH ON HIS PLEDGE TO HOLD ELECTIONS IN OCTOBER. (THIS HAS BEEN THE MEA POSITION FOR SOME TIME, SEE NEW DELHI 11230, AUGUST 9.) SINGH'S REASONING GENERALLY FOLLOWED ALONG THE LINES OF EMBASSY ISLAMABAD'S (ISLAMABAD 9112), BUT WITH ONE SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE. HE TOOK THE POSITION THAT ASIDE FROM OTHER REASONS WHICH WOULD LEAD HIM TO HOLD THE POLLS ON TIME, ZIA WAS NOW AWARE THAT IF HE POSTPONED THE ELECTION IT WOULD BE BHUTTO WHO WOULD GAIN. THE FORMER PRIME MINISTER, NOW THE OPPONENT OF ZIA AND A MAN WHO HAS WARNED PAKISTAN AGAINST THE DANGERS OF BONAPARTISM, WOULD EMERGE AS A HERO (WHILE THE PNA LEADERS, WHO HAVE BEEN COOPERATING WITH ZIA AND SEEM TO BE FAVORED BY HIM, WOULD PRESUMABLY LOOK LIKE DUPES.) SINGH AGREED WITH THE EMBASSY ISLAMABAD IMPRESSION THAT ZIA'S PLEDGE WAS BEING INCREASINGLY QUESTIONED BY OBSERVERS IN PAKISTAN AND ELSEWHERE. THE PNA LEADERSHIP ITSELF, HE THOUGHT, WAS WORRIED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF A POSTPONEMENT, HENCE THE ORCHESTRATED CALL FOR ELECTIONS ON TIME. HE SAID MEA CONSIDERED THAT THE DEVELOPMENTS OF THE FIRST WEEK AFTER EID WOULD BE CONFIDENTIAL

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CRUCIAL IN DETERMINING WHICH WAY THINGS WOULD GO. HE ALSO SAID THAT IT WAS BECOMING INCREASINGLY EVIDENT THAT THE PAK MILITARY WAS LIKELY TO CONTINUE TO PLAY A POLITICAL ROLE IN THE POST-ELECTION SCENE, ASSUMING ELECTIONS WERE HELD.

3. SINGH SAID THAT THE AFGHANS HAD SEEMED QUITE NERVOUS ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS IN PAKISTAN WHEN THEY DISCUSSED THE SITUATION THERE WITH THE VAJPAYEE PARTY. THEY WERE TROUBLED BY THE POSSIBILITY OF A CONTINUATION OF A MILITARY REGIME. ALTHOUGH THEY HAD LITTLE LOVE FOR BHUTTO, THEIR PAST RECORD WITH THE PAK MILITARY WAS NOT SUCH AS TO INSPIRE CONFIDENCE. THEY WERE ALSO TROUBLED, ACCORDING TO SINGH, BY WHAT THEY SAW AS THE INCREASING POWER OF CONSERVATIVE RELIGIOUS ELEMENTS IN PAKISTAN AND THE GREATER ISLAMIC EMPHASIS IN PAK LAW AND POLICY. THEY FEARED THAT THIS WOULD BOLSTER THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD AND OTHER OBSCURANTIST GROUPS UNFRIENDLY TO THE REGIME. (THE IRONY OF PAKISTAN LEADING AFGHANISTAN BACK TO THE ISLAMIC PAST WAS NOT ALTOGETHER LOST ON SINGH.) AT THE SAME TIME THEY TOLD THE INDIANS, ACCORDING TO SINGH, THAT THEY DID NOT WANT

THE BREAKUP OF PAKISTAN, ONLY THE HONORING OF THE RIGHTS OF THE PATHANS AND BALUCH UNDER THE PAK CONSTITUTION.

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4. AS HE HAS BEFORE, SINGH STRESSED INDIA'S INTEREST IN THE RESTORATION OF STABILITY IN PAKISTAN. HE CITED AS A CASE IN POINT VAJPAYEE'S COMMENT FOLLOWING HIS RETURN FROM KABUL THAT MUCH AS THE GOA AND THE GOI MIGHT WANT TO DO SO, IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO INCREASE INDO-AFGHAN TRADE ONLY IF PAKISTAN ALLOWED TRANSIT FACILITIES. ACCORDING TO SINGH, BHUTTO HAD PRIVATELY TOLD THE INDIANS THAT ONCE THE MARCH ELECTIONS WERE SAFELY OUT OF THE WAY THE GOP WOULD BE PREPARED TO AGREE TO OVERLAND TRANSIT, USING PAK TRUCKS. HE ARGUED THAT THE RESTORATION OF STABILITY WOULD ALLOW SUCH FURTHER PROGRESS IN INDO-PAK RELATIONS, NOW LARGELY STALLED. (BUT NOT STALLED ALTOGETHER. IN
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HIS DISCUSSION OF THE INCREASING WILLINGNESS OF THE ZIA GOVERNMENT TO UNDERTAKE NEW POLICIES SINGH MENTIONED THAT THE GOP HAD SIGNALLED TO NEW DELHI THAT IT WAS NOW PREPARED TO GO AHEAD ON A TELECOMMUNICATIONS AGREEMENT. ORIGINALLY TO HAVE BEEN SIGNED ON JULY 5, THE DAY OF THE COUP, THIS HAD BEEN HELD UP BY THE GOP ON GROUNDS THAT IT WAS INAPPROPRIATE FOR AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT TO MOVE AHEAD ON IT. A SIGNING CEREMONY IS EXPECTED SHORTLY.)

5. SINGH ALSO SAID THAT INDIA CONTINUED TO FOLLOW A STRICTLY HANDS-OFF ATTITUDE TOWARD PAKISTAN DEVELOPMENTS. (ALL EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THAT THIS IS CORRECT.) THEY DID NOT INTEND TO DO ANYTHING PROVOCATIVE NOR ALLOW THEMSELVES TO BE PROVOKED BY THE PAKS. THE PAKS, HE SAID, CONTINUED TO BE SATISFIED WITH THE INDIAN APPROACH AND HAD THEMSELVES BEHAVED IN A SIMILARLY UNPROVOCATIVE WAY.

6. DISCUSSING THE KABUL VISIT, SINGH SAID THE GOA HAD GREETED THE VAJPAYEE PARTY WITH UNUSUAL WARMTH. HE SAID THAT THE AFGHANS HAD BEEN ANXIOUS TO ESTABLISH PERSONAL CONTACT WITH THE LEADERSHIP OF THE NEW INDIAN GOVERNMENT, AND HAD FOUND THE MEETING WITH VAJPAYEE REASSURING IN CONVEYING TO THE AFGHANS THE CONTINUITY OF INDIAN FOREIGN POLICIES (SEE KABUL 6406, WHICH QUOTES THE INDIAN AMBASSADOR THERE TO THE SAME EFFECT.) HE NOTED WITH OBVIOUS SATISFACTION THAT AFGHAN FOREIGN MINISTER WAHID ABDULLAH HAD TWICE STATED THAT A NEW HORIZON HAS BEEN OPENED IN INDO-AFGHAN RELATIONS WITH THE VISIT, A QUOTE VAJPAYEE ALSO CITED ON HIS RETURN. AS VAJPAYEE HIMSELF HAS DONE, SINGH PUT THE VISIT TO KABUL IN THE CONTEXT OF INDIAN

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EFFORTS TO BETTER RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS, THE AIM ALSO OF EARIER VISITS BY THE FOREIGN MINISTER TO RANGOON AND KATHMANDU.

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Message Attributes

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